

# Conference Call Summary

## Introduction

Jos Linn, Grassroots Manager, U.S. Poverty Campaigns

- You download the [slides](#) for today's call in the Take Action box in the top right-hand corner of the [RESULTS Homepage](#)
- Thank you all for your successful outreach to candidates in October and also for the amazing successes you've had in generating media and meeting with members of Congress in 2014
  - Overall, we've generated at least 92 media pieces to support our US poverty campaign work.
  - RESULTS volunteers have spoken to at least 119 members of Congress (at least 50 different representatives and 26 senators) face-to-face about critical policies to address poverty in the US this year – more than double our average of lobby meetings, 34 more than any previous year.

## Overview Call Agenda

- Guest Speaker – Jared Bernstein
- November Action overview and monthly training
- Roll Call
- Shares
- Fundraising Update and Announcements

## Guest Speaker: Jared Bernstein (Washington, DC)

### Introduction

Jared Bernstein joined the Center in May 2011 as a Senior Fellow. From 2009 to 2011, Bernstein was the Chief Economist and Economic Adviser to Vice President Joe Biden, executive director of the White House Task Force on the Middle Class, and a member of President Obama's economic team.

Bernstein's areas of expertise include federal and state economic and fiscal policies, income inequality and mobility, trends in employment and earnings, international comparisons, and the analysis of financial and housing markets.

Prior to joining the Obama administration, Bernstein was a senior economist and the director of the Living Standards Program at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C.

Between 1995 and 1996, he held the post of deputy chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor.

He is the author and coauthor of numerous books for both popular and academic audiences, including "Crunch: Why Do I Feel So Squeezed?" and nine editions of "The State of Working America." Bernstein has published extensively in various venues, including The New York Times, Washington Post, Financial Times, and Research in Economics and Statistics. He is an on-air commentator for the cable stations CNBC and MSNBC, contributor to The New York Times Economix blog, and hosts [www.jaredbernsteinblog.com](http://www.jaredbernsteinblog.com).

Bernstein holds a PhD in Social Welfare from Columbia University.

**Questions:**

1. Jared, as you know RESULTS and many others have been pushing Congress to protect and strengthen the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) (EITC) and [Child Tax Credit](#) (CTC). Now that the election is done, what do you see Congress doing in the *Lame Duck* session and are there any opportunities you see for us to move any anti-poverty policies forward, especially making the EITC and CTC improvements permanent?
  - *Issues Congress will address several issues during the Lame Duck Session, mainly the Continuing Resolution (CR) and tax extenders*
  - *Current CR will expire on December 11 so unless they finish the annual appropriations by then or do another CR or government will shut down*
    - *Some Republican leaders are now wanting a short term CR that will go until next Congress comes in, which, based on make-up of new Congress, is a potential threat to programs RESULTS supports*
  - *Tax Extenders bill is designed to extend business tax credits Congress usually does each year*
    - *Could be some horse-trading in the tax extenders debate*
    - *Republicans want to make many of these credits permanent without paying for them, which will add hundreds of billions of dollars to the deficit; it would also eat up three-fourths of the savings created by the 2013 fiscal cliff tax deal*
    - *If the tax extenders are made permanent, they won't have to be offset in any major tax reform package, which again is fiscally irresponsible as it adds to the deficit*
    - *Key for RESULT, CBPP, and others is the future of the "ARRA refundables" (improvements to the EITC and CTC in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act); these improvements expire in 2017*
      - *If they expire, 12 million people, including 7 million children, will fall into or deeper into poverty ([numbers have been updated](#) to 17 million people, 8 million children)*
      - *EITC marriage penalty will come back and families with 3 or more children will lose part of EITC; many lower-income parents will lose their CTC altogether*
    - *It is preferable that the tax extenders be paid for but if legislators push for permanent extension, other side can demand permanent extension of EITC and CTC improvements as part of the deal (NOTE from RESULTS: this is more "inside baseball" for lawmakers; it is NOT the message advocates should be pushing)*
2. Looking at the outcome of the election, what opportunities and threats do you see over the next two years with regard to programs that serve low-income Americans?
  - *Threats from Action*
    - *New Congress could push to block grant SNAP (food stamps) and push other bad provisions from the Farm Bill debate (harsh work requirements, etc.)*
    - *Block-granting SNAP is a terrible idea, just look at TANF*

- *It's anti-poverty impact was significantly reduced when it was block-granted in the 1990s*
  - *Block-granting also makes it easier to cut the programs later on and enact stringent eligibility requirements*
  - *Congress could impose per capita cap on Medicaid*
  - *Social Security Disability Insurance will be debated*
  - *Congress could enact regressive tax reform, enacting more "trickle down" policies that favor the wealthy*
  - *Congress could try to enact a Balanced Budget Amendment (BBA) and ask for a Constitutional Convention to ratify it*
    - *BBA is a surefire way to starve anti-poverty programs*
  - *Threats from Inaction*
    - *Fail to increase in the minimum wage*
    - *Fail to invest in infrastructure*
    - *Fail to make the EITC and CTC improvements permanent*
    - *Fail to enact immigration reform, although Pres. Obama may act on this if Congress does not*
    - *Fail to undo sequestration, which comes back in 2016*
  - *Opportunities*
    - *Congress could come together on infrastructure investments*
    - *Congress could work on corporate tax reform; President Obama has plans to use revenue from corporate tax reform to invest in infrastructure*
    - *Congress could act on minimum wage*
    - *Congress could expand the EITC for workers without children*
    - *Congress could undo sequestration*
3. What things can grassroots advocates do to help break through the gridlock that currently plagues Congress and actually get meaningful policy passed in the near-term?
- *Reality is that Republicans will need 60 votes to pass most things in the Senate and the President will use the veto for legislation he won't support*
  - *Actions of groups like RESULTS have become even more important*
  - *Important to not only think nationally, but sub-nationally*
    - *Governors of states cannot afford the gridlock that Congress engages in; they need to get things done*
      - *Remember that on Election Day, a number of states passed new minimum wage laws, including conservative states like AR and NE*
      - *Ohio made infrastructure investments for the Port of Cleveland*
    - *Also have to push back against bad things in the state, like attempts to convene a Constitutional Convention for the BBA*
  - *We need to take a broad overview of things going forward*

- *The is a broad sense in the media and with some lawmakers that the economy is returning back to normal, but only for some*
    - *The poor and near-poor are still struggling*
    - *Median household incomes are stagnant; poverty is still around 14-15 percent*
  - *We have to push back and not accept the narrative that the economic recovery is all well and good*
4. Question from Columbus, OH: What does President Obama mean by “the American job” in his speeches?
- *The President says that we’ve had growth and created millions of jobs but there are still a lot of people who are not feeling the benefits*
  - *It’s important when defining things like that, we have to be specific and granular;*
  - *Ask the question “Which economy are you talking about?”*
    - *We need to be thinking about those workers who are still struggling*
  - *We need to lower the trade deficit and pursue a stronger labor market; we need to get unemployment very low*
5. Question from Washington, DC: What about funding for Head Start and Early Head Start with regard to the budget that needs to be passed by December? Also, what is your response to the many studies that show that increasing the minimum wage will not significantly hurt unemployment?
- *I’ll answer your second question first. Thank you for bringing this up. You are correct in that hundreds of papers show that increasing the minimum wage does not hurt unemployment – it has its intended effect of raising the pay of low-wage workers without doing much to diminish the work opportunities*
  - *We have the proof through states and city initiatives raising the minimum wage*
  - *CBO analysis says that raising it to \$10.10 per hour over three years (like bills in Congress) would benefit 24.5 million workers, while costing 500,000 jobs. This means that 49 workers are helped for every 1 job lost.*
  - *Since a lot of “churn” in low-wage job market, people who lost jobs would likely find new work quickly*
  - *But have to be careful; cannot simply raise the minimum wage as high as we want*
  - *On Head Start and Early Head Start, they are part of non-defense discretionary programs (NDD) and thus impacted by sequestration so my previous concerns about discretionary spending are germane to those programs too*
6. Question from Minneapolis, MN: My local Democratic challenger agreed with incumbent that we need to reduce corporate taxes to discourage offshore movement of corporations. Any comment on that?
- *I believe that to be a ruse. If you look at places they are going, the taxes rates are very low. And if you look at their effective tax rates now (what they actually pay), they are already low*
  - *These apply specifically to multi-national companies while businesses that don’t have multi-national operations pay higher taxes*

- *The motivation for this offshoring and inversion more about tax avoidance. Reducing rate might reduce this avoidance a little, but we'll never get the rate as low as Ireland, for example*
- *We shouldn't be moved by that argument. That doesn't mean we wouldn't benefit from corporate tax reform but I don't think we're going to stop that kind of avoidance from lower the rates down*

*Keep up the great work, RESULTS!*

## November Action Review and Training

Meredith Dodson, Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns (Washington, DC)

**November Action:** Write letters to the editor urging Congress to protect working families by making the EITC and CTC improvements permanent during the Lame Duck session.

### Talking Points for Letters to the Editor

- **Look through recent media coverage to respond to a specific piece in your local newspaper** about the election or Congress's Lame Duck session.
- Remind readers that **Congress will return to Washington to negotiate final "tax extenders" legislation**, which could make several expensive tax breaks for corporations and wealthy individuals permanent and add to the federal budget deficit.
- Flag for readers that there are **smarter tax policies that Congress should focus their energies on: the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC)** for low-income working families, our nation's most successful anti-poverty programs for children which [lifted 8.8 million Americans out of poverty in 2013](#).
- Specifically mention that **EITC and the CTC are a hand up** – not a hand out – enabling low-income working families to make ends meet. Perhaps mention that a range of studies also demonstrate that credits like the CTC and EITC boost children's test scores, college enrollment rates, and earnings later in life while incentivizing work and prioritizing families. If you can share a personal story of the impact of these policies in your own life, do so!
- Note that **key improvements to the EITC and CTC are set to expire in 2017**. If they do, about [17 million people, including 8 million children, will fall into poverty or deeper into poverty](#).
- **Urge your members of Congress by name** to work with leaders to focus their unfinished business making the important EITC and CTC provisions permanent and building on the success of the EITC by embracing bipartisan efforts to expand it to workers without children.

### Tips for Getting Letters Published

- **Be Brief** – keep your letter short (150-250 words). The shorter it is, the better chance it will get published. Go to your newspaper's website to see their guidelines for LTEs.
- **Have a Hook** – mention a recent story in the paper or an event that's been covered in the news (e.g. the election).
- **Local** – if you can, use state or local facts in your letter. Papers want to see how the issue impacts people in their community.
- **Be Personal** – if you have a story that relates to the issue, share it. Paint a picture for the reader.

- **Be Passionate** – show your passion in your writing. If you are appalled, say it. If you are thrilled, say it. Don't "drab" their attention, "grab" it.
- **Call to Action** – don't forget to ask the readers or your members of Congress to do something. Always include an action step.
- **Name** – Mention your members of Congress BY NAME, whether it's thanking them for something or asking them to take action. It will get their attention (e.g. I urge Sen. Smith to push for a permanent extension of the EITC and CTC improvements).

**Resources** to help you with letters to the editor:

- RESULTS Activist Toolkit on LTEs: [http://www.results.org/skills\\_center/milestone\\_18/](http://www.results.org/skills_center/milestone_18/)
- Media PowerPoint: [http://www.results.org/uploads/files/results\\_-\\_harnessing\\_the\\_media\\_and\\_ltes\\_\(activist\\_toolkit\).ppt](http://www.results.org/uploads/files/results_-_harnessing_the_media_and_ltes_(activist_toolkit).ppt)
- Find Media Contacts at: <http://capwiz.com/results/dbq/media/>.

**Don't forget about Editorials!**

- Now that the election is over, this is a great time to **circle back to editorial page editors and writers about doing an editorial**
- With election over, **they have more time** to look at your material
- **Resources** to help you with editorials:
  - The [November Action](#) has talking points and publishing tips
  - The [September Action](#) has tips specifically for generating editorials
  - The [RESULTS EITC/CTC Editorial Memo](#) has updated poverty data you can send to writers
  - Find local poverty data at: [www.talkpoverty.org/poverty](http://www.talkpoverty.org/poverty). Also, send them a copy of the chart on the following slide.

*If you have questions or would like coaching for your LTEs or editorials, please contact Jos Linn at [jlinn@results.org](mailto:jlinn@results.org).*

## Shares

**Kristy Martino, U.S. Poverty Organizer (Kittery Point, ME)**

Great work out there on the campaign trail! Let's hear some of a few stories on the success you had reaching out to candidates before the election.

**Sandy Duckert, RESULTS Albuquerque (NM)**

I'd like to tell you my serendipity story from last month. I had to drop off some things at a friend's house and as I was driving out of her subdivision I saw a home with lots of Democratic political signs and cars parked in front of it. It was a Democratic early vote rally. What to do? I crashed it. There were about 80 people there from different groups, lots of local government offices and our Senator Tom Udall and Representative Ben Ray Lujan were expected. So, I listened to the pep rally and as the crowds around our Senator and Rep, cleared away, I got a chance to talk with each of them about tax policy for EITC, CTC, and FSTC. Senator Udall is planning to introduce the Song Act regarding streamlining and strengthening government assistance programs. I talked with both the Senator and Representative about the need for a comprehensive and gradual step down program to really help hard working families get off assistance rather than fall off the cliff as they do now. It was a low key, fun exchange with both of them. I'm glad I crashed the party and that I left just as the police were raiding it because neighbors complained about the noise and number of cars. I love serendipity.

### **David Tate, RESULTS Northern VA (Arlington)**

I wanted to share with you a recent experience our group had with a congressional candidate. It all began with handing out assignments following the Sat. RESULTS call that pointed out the importance of establishing early relationship with potential congressman. I volunteered to contact Don Beyer, who was running to take over the seat of retiring congressman Jim Moran. One of our group members Ann Beltran was familiar with his web site so that's where I started. As it turns out he was holding a forum on Poverty within the next week. This of course was ideal for our purposes. There was no address for the forum only an email to request an invitation. I suspected that there may be some screening process involved so I described RESULTS and noted that we have partnered with such notables as Muhammad Yunus, Jeffrey Sachs and Tavis Smiley. We got a positive response and eventually RSVP'd that we would have four attendees. We all went armed with our questions and potential techniques for getting noticed. As it turned out getting noticed wasn't a problem. The forum was a small affair, perhaps 35 people snuggled into someone's home. We were one of the first to arrive, even before candidate Beyer. When he did arrive we could not avoid bumping into him given the intimate venue. We all had a chance to introduce ourselves and the mission of RESULTS. The forum consisted of 4 fantastic panelists, and to say that we had front row seats would be an understatement. We were literally shoulder to shoulder with the panelists. We got in two questions relating to EITC and the importance of providing health care to people in poverty. Don Beyer indicated that maintaining and expanding EITC is his top priority, and he recognized that we need to make additional progress to expand access to health care. After the forum had ended, our group was one of the first he addressed. Actually, he couldn't have exited the room without passing through the human barrier that the four of us presented. We were able to provide additional detail about RESULTS. He was impressed that we were all volunteers and expressed the desire to continue to work with us on issues of poverty. We were also able to talk with his campaign manager, who will be his chief of staff. She indicated that after the campaign she has a lot of work to do as far as understanding all the public policy issues and she would welcome our help on the issues relating to alleviation of poverty. By the time the evening ended addressing the candidate as Mr. Beyer just seemed too formal, as we left it was thanks for the wonderful evening, Don.

### **Susan Rack, RESULTS Bernardsville (NJ)**

I attended the 2014 Congressional Elections Leadership Meeting at the Aidekman Family Jewish Community Campus. This meeting was organized by the Community Relations Committee; a public policy, governmental affairs, and advocacy arm of the Jewish Federation of the Greater MetroWest NJ.

- Mark Dunec, Democrat 11th District (Frelinghuyen's challenger)
- Frelinghuysen, Republican 11th district declined the invitation
- Janice Kovach Democrat 7th district challenger
- Leonard Lance Republican 7th district

I asked each of the 3 whether they planned to strengthen and expand EITC and CTC. They each expressed their concern for the poor. I gave them each info on EITC and CTC and alerted them to Financial Security Credit program. I asked Lance to give his rationale for finally voting to cut SNAP. (Thanked him for the meeting to speak with him in DC last June)

Lance stated that the program had become too expensive. I followed up with info on how responsive the program is to need and small fraud rate. Spoke with him briefly in person.

The most important event of the meeting was connecting with Melanie Roth Gorelick, Director of Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ, who has a group involved in protecting SNAP (just finished a SNAP Challenge) and addressing hunger issues. She asked where I got my info on Lance's record and stat. I told her about RESULTS and followed up with an email. Perhaps her group could become another NJ RESULTS team. She has not responded to my email yet but I will follow up again.

## Fundraising and Announcements

Jen Paprotna, Development Manager for RESULTS/RESULTS Educational Fund (Jersey City, NJ)

Hi, this is Jen Paprotna, the Development Manager for RESULTS and RESULTS Educational Fund. I want to talk a few minutes about year-end fundraising for RESULTS.

- **Please consider fundraising for RESULTS this fall!** Check out these upcoming events and invite people you know to come:
  - [Santa Fe, New Mexico - November 7](#)
  - [Detroit, Michigan - November 16](#)
  - [Houston, Texas - November 21](#)
  - [Austin, Texas - November 22](#)
  - [Seattle, Washington – December 15](#)
- **We also have a Friends and Family Goal of \$25,000.** Upcoming F&F events:
  - [RESULTS Dallas - Virtual Thanksgiving Feast](#)
  - [RESULTS DC - Virtual Thanksgiving Feast](#)
  - [Cindy Levin's Race to End Poverty](#)
  - [Asheville, NC – Virtual Thanksgiving Feast](#)
- **Take advantage of our online fundraising resources at:**
  - Friends and Family Campaign site: [www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSFFC](http://www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSFFC)
  - Virtual Thanksgiving site: [www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSFEAST](http://www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSFEAST)
  - Friends and Family Celebrations site: [www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSCELEBRATE](http://www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSCELEBRATE)
  - Friends and Family Run site: [www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSRUN](http://www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSRUN)
  - Please Contact Jen DeFranco ([jdefranco@results.org](mailto:jdefranco@results.org)) for question and support in doing a physical or online event.

Remember that RESULTS cannot do the work we do without the financial resources to make it happen. Our staff, our website, conference calls, the International Conference, materials and all the other things we do to support you in your important work are possible only because we have the resources to pay for them. To help, for years you – RESULTS volunteers – have done fundraising to help. Be they big events or small, online campaigns or through the mail, your fundraising work has allowed us to continue to support you in creating the political will to end poverty. We ask each of you to consider doing a fundraiser this fall.



Friends and Family can be done online or through the mail, we have new online resources to help you, which you can see in the slide. Our Friends and Family campaign goal this year is \$25,000 and we're just about half way there. Please consider doing a fundraising event or participating in our Friends and Family campaign this fall so we can meet our goal and continue to support you in the great work you do! For more information about fundraising for RESULTS, please contact Jen DeFranco at [jdefranco@results.org](mailto:jdefranco@results.org).

Now let me end the call with a few announcements.

- If you live in an area with no RESULTS U.S. Poverty group, please join the next **RESULTS U.S. Poverty Free Agents Calls** on Tuesday, November 18 at 1:00 pm and 9:00 pm ET.
- Also, introduce RESULTS to someone you know by inviting them to join the next **RESULTS Introductory Call** this Wednesday, November 12 at 9:00 pm ET. People can register at the link listed there in the PowerPoint.
- **Remember to save the date for the 2015 RESULTS International Conference**. The conference will be held **July 18-21, 2015** in Washington, DC at the Washington Court Hotel. We'll have more details and registration information for you soon.
- You can find details of these and other events, along with conference call numbers, on the [RESULTS Events Calendar](#).
- Thank you for being on the call today. The next RESULTS U.S. Poverty National Conference Call is **Saturday, December 13 at 12:30pm ET**.

We are RESULTS hope that you and your family all have a very wonderful Thanksgiving holiday. If any of you are traveling, please travel safe. Operator, if you would please open up all the lines and let's all wish each other a very Happy Thanksgiving!